



## Meet the women helping to build the future in our Repairs & Construction service

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Looking for work? Join our virtual event in May!  
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Keep up to date with YHN's brand new website  
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# Welcome to the latest edition of Homes & People, I hope it finds you well.



**My name is TJ, and I'm a member of YHN's Customer Service Committee. I joined the committee last year just a few days before the first lockdown. Despite all the restrictions we're lucky that the committee's work has been able to continue.**

We've still had our regular meetings, just online, and I've even taken part from Africa! This is just another example of how we've all had to adapt and work differently under Covid, but we've somehow managed to get on with things.

Over the next few months the Customer Service Committee is looking forward to moving on with our Think Big project. We've had to pause the project a couple of times but we're ready for the next important stage, where we use what you told us is important to you to shape YHN's services.

You can read about this year's Community Fund on page 5 – we've made some changes to help community groups respond to the changing needs within our communities.

I'm very excited to read about YHN's new website on page 10. IT is my area of work, and I think that now, more than ever, YHN's website is so important in helping customers find out about services quickly and easily. Don't forget that if you need any help in getting online, YHN offers free computer training for all customers. Digital skills support sessions will start again in September at the City Library, look out for info on how to book your place in the next edition of Homes & People.

I hope you enjoy this edition.

**TJ Rufai**  
YHN's Customer Service Committee

## Are your details up to date?

To help us keep in touch with you and provide updates on our services, please let us know if you think your contact details may be out of date.

Email: [communicationsteam@yhn.org.uk](mailto:communicationsteam@yhn.org.uk) | Online: [www.yhn.org.uk/contact-us](http://www.yhn.org.uk/contact-us) | Call: 0191 278 8600

# Latest information on our services

## Our offices

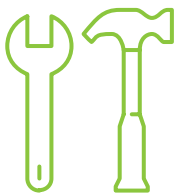


We are working closely with Newcastle City Council to review the implications of the Government's roadmap to gradually ease national coronavirus restrictions.

Many colleagues continue to work from home and those teams that do need to come into the office have been given advice on following the Government's social distancing guidelines through our safe working practices.

As national restrictions ease, we will announce our plans for reopening our customer service facilities. For current services updates please visit [www.yhn.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.yhn.org.uk/coronavirus).

## Repairs



We have continued to deliver emergency and urgent repairs throughout the national lockdown and have plans in place for resuming our full repairs service as national restrictions ease, ensuring social distancing guidelines are in place for the safety of customers and colleagues. We will continue to closely monitor the situation and announce any changes to our current services on our social media pages and on our services update webpage: [www.yhn.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.yhn.org.uk/coronavirus).

## Registering and bidding for properties



Customers can continue to register and bid for properties on the Tyne and Wear Homes website. Visit [www.tyneandwearhomes.org.uk](http://www.tyneandwearhomes.org.uk) to bid on a property, view your account or check on the progress of your bid.

Moves and mutual exchanges can go ahead if safe to do so and following social distancing guidelines. Due to national restrictions, there may be some delays, however we will be doing as much virtually as we can. If you have any questions, or need support in completing a property application, please email [housingsolutions@yhn.org.uk](mailto:housingsolutions@yhn.org.uk).

## Support for customers



We work closely with Newcastle City Council and can advise, guide and signpost you wherever we can.

We understand that finances can be a concern for many customers during this difficult time; if you are having any concerns about paying your rent, please get in touch as soon as possible so we can discuss how we can support you. More information on rent, finances, Universal Credit and benefits advice is available on [www.yhn.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.yhn.org.uk/coronavirus).

We continue to offer support to customers experiencing anti-social behaviour or noise nuisance. To register a complaint please contact our Safe Living team on [safeliving@yhn.org.uk](mailto:safeliving@yhn.org.uk).

## Contacting us



For any enquiries you can call us on 0191 278 8600.

You can save time by getting in touch with us online and help to keep our lines free for emergencies. Visit [www.yhn.org.uk/contact-us](http://www.yhn.org.uk/contact-us) or email us on [yhn@yhn.org.uk](mailto:yhn@yhn.org.uk).

# YHN Community Fund - back for another year!



Following another successful year of the YHN Community Fund (despite the challenges of COVID-19!) we are delighted to be able to invest more money into local projects.



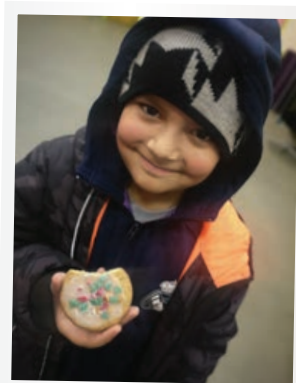
Voluntary and community organisations can bid for a share of £80,000, offered across the year in four rounds. A share of £20,000 is available in each round, with the first round launching this month.

We are looking for projects that will focus on:

- Building stronger communities
- Reducing social isolation and loneliness
- Improving mental health and wellbeing
- Tackling digital exclusion and digital poverty

## An 'interesting' second year!

Impacted by the pandemic, some of our successful projects had no choice but to pause or pivot and change their delivery model so they could continue to serve those in need.



The 14 successful projects included a vital counselling service for primary school children and their families, open access youth provision, salvaging food destined for landfill to create delicious and nutritious meals for those in need, Elvis-themed music to bring enjoyment to local residents, support for a long-standing and much needed social club for people with learning needs, and much more...

“ Receiving the meals has given me something to look forward to every week. Being able to have someone to talk to has helped me feel better because I can talk through problems and get things off my chest. ”

YHN customer part of the Food Nation Bait and Banter project, serving nutritious meals and providing warm conversations to isolated residents.

## Help us get the word out!

If you are part of or know any local charities or organisations that would be interested in applying to this pot of money, then please share information about the fund.

PLEASE NOTE - individuals cannot apply to the fund and eligibility criteria applies - contact the Engagement Team if you have any questions.

## Find out more:

- Email [communityfund@yhn.org.uk](mailto:communityfund@yhn.org.uk)
- Phone: 07814 079518

Deadline for applications - Friday 30th April 2021



# Building the future: women in construction

We celebrated Women in Construction Week in March and want to encourage women to apply for new repairs and construction jobs at YHN.

Our Repairs & Construction Services have some fantastic female employees, but they are still significantly outnumbered by their male colleagues, and that's something we're committed to improving.



Some of the women working in our Repairs & Construction Services – Caitlyn, Linzy, Hannah and April.

## April's story

April Halligan, 22, started an apprenticeship with Newcastle City Council in 2016.

Having completed her apprenticeship, April now works as a bricklayer, with typical jobs including concreting and laying flagstones, building garden walls, and fitting new drains when laying a new pavement.

April said: "I've been wanting to do bricklaying since I was kid. I was six and my grandad took me to a building site he was working on and that just stuck with me for the rest of my life.



"My favourite toy as a kid was Lego, and I just used to love building things with the blocks. But at school, I never felt like construction was an option for me to go into because there weren't any other females who were interested in this profession."

How does she find working in a job that has traditionally been seen to be a male role?

"For me, I think it has changed and a lot of it depends on you as an individual. Don't get me wrong, I love getting dressed up in my heels, but I've got four brothers and grew up around males. Since working at the council, I've never felt uncomfortable and always had praise from the lads telling me it's great I decided to get into it.

"I have had some customers who question me when I turn up to the job. But then others are really complimentary. One man was driving down the street and stopped and said: 'You're a credit to us all, never seen a female bricklayer – it's brilliant, and you should be so proud of yourself'.

"It would be great if more women were encouraged into the industry – I think a lot of women may think it's too hard or that they'll get judged, but it really isn't like that.

"I like the challenge of coming across something I haven't done before and then standing back and looking at the finished product – for instance, I've just built a wall!

"Why shouldn't we do this work? We do just as good a job."

# Hannah's story

Hannah Porter, 26, has been an electrician with Newcastle City Council for almost ten years.

She said: "I applied for an apprenticeship a few weeks after leaving school. I chose electrical as my uncle is an electrician and, at the time, he was rewiring a research centre in Antarctica, which proved to me you could take this profession anywhere.

"Schools these days are very academic based, but for someone like me who wasn't very good with the pressure of exams and coursework yet practically was really good, an apprenticeship worked. I got paid to learn on the job whilst having time to attend college.

"In the ten years I've been here it has changed for the better, yet in my opinion it will always be seen as a masculine environment. Not a day goes by when I don't knock at a door and the response is "Eeeh a woman."



"It's not the known thing for women to be doing a job like this, to be fixing your toilet, installing your lights or fitting you a new front door.

"To any young women or girls reading this and thinking about a career in construction I would say go for it! The support is definitely there in the workplace and, if it isn't, don't stand for it.

"I've never come across one male that I work alongside who has said I shouldn't be here or doing this job, they've all helped me along the way."

If you think you might be interested in an apprenticeship within our Repairs & Construction Services then please email your interest to [apprenticeships@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:apprenticeships@newcastle.gov.uk) and we'll get back to you.



## Your right to a safe home

The **Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018** is in place to make sure that rented houses and flats are 'fit for human habitation', which means that they are safe, healthy and free from things that could cause serious harm.

If rented houses and flats are not 'fit for human habitation', tenants can take their landlords to court.

The court can make the landlord carry out repairs or put right health and safety problems, and can also make the landlord pay compensation to the tenant.

YHN believes that everyone has the right to a safe home, and we work hard to complete reported repairs within the agreed timeframes. Our advice to customers is to report a repair or issue as soon as possible. It's really important repairs are reported at the right time - contact us on 0191 278 7878 to do this.

Since the Homes Act came into place, 'no win, no fee' firms of solicitors have targeted tenants across the country, promising compensation for repairs issues. These 'no win, no fee' arrangements often turn out to be nothing of the sort, with charges buried in lengthy legal contracts. Tenants can be charged thousands of pounds if they leave the agreement, and even if successful, the payment to the tenant is often quite small compared to the solicitor's costs. If the claim is unsuccessful, tenants can be liable for their landlord's legal fees worth several thousand pounds. Please be aware of the financial risks involved, and always report repairs to YHN as soon as you can.

For more information on the Homes Act, read the Guide for Tenants at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/homes-fitness-for-human-habitation-act-2018](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homes-fitness-for-human-habitation-act-2018)

# Meet the building safety team

We have many measures and precautions in place to ensure all of the properties we manage meet the highest levels of building safety standards.

These include carrying out regular inspections, such as your annual gas safety check, installing safety features, such as smoke alarms, and complying with building regulations and legislation.

To help us achieve these standards, we have a team of building safety experts who specialise in areas such as fire, gas, asbestos, water, electrical, and multi-storey safety, ensuring we have the right safety measures in place to suit all of the different properties we manage.

## What can you do to keep your property safe?

Our range of building safety measures and our ongoing programme of inspections and maintenance ensure we go above and beyond what we are legally required to do to keep the buildings we manage safe. However, we are all responsible for keeping ourselves and our neighbours safe so we rely on you to tell us if you notice a potential hazard or safety concern in or around your home.



## Keeping multi-storey blocks safe

Alan Robson, pictured, is our Building Safety Manager who is responsible for overseeing the safety measures in place in the multi-storey buildings we manage. A trained firefighter, Alan has over 30 years' experience of building and fire safety and was Assistant Chief Fire Officer at Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service before he joined YHN. Alan says:

"In my previous role at the fire service I was always impressed with YHN's attitude towards building and fire safety so I was delighted to join the team in 2020. Everyone at YHN is committed to making sure we provide safe and secure properties our customers can call home. We keep up to date with best practice and install and provide comprehensive safety measures, but we also welcome suggestions and feedback from our customers so please do get in touch with any building safety questions or concerns so I can investigate and get back to you."

### Get in touch

If you have any questions or concerns about the safety of your building or property, please let us know by emailing [buildingsafety@yhn.org.uk](mailto:buildingsafety@yhn.org.uk) or calling **0191 278 8600**. In an emergency such as a fire, you should call 999.

# Improving our complaints process

In the last issue we told you that we have been assessing our complaints process against the recently launched Housing Ombudsman Service Complaints Handling Code. You can view our self-assessment online at [www.yhn.org.uk](http://www.yhn.org.uk).



## A quicker and easier complaints process

The assessment told us what we're good at and what we need to improve and we've already started to make our complaints process quicker and easier. From April, our complaints process will only have two stages instead of three. This means that if you're not satisfied with how we've responded to a complaint, you can access the services of the Housing Ombudsman sooner.

The Housing Ombudsman is an independent organisation that makes sure housing providers like YHN handle customer complaints fairly and efficiently.

If you're not happy with the outcome of a complaint, you can ask the Housing Ombudsman to review it for you. We will give you information about how to do this when we close your complaint.

### Get in touch

Give us a compliment or complaint by:

- Filling in an online form at [www.yhn.org.uk](http://www.yhn.org.uk)
- Calling us on **0191 278 8600**
- Emailing [YHNComplaints@yhn.org.uk](mailto:YHNComplaints@yhn.org.uk)
- Writing to us at: **Customer Experience Team, Your Homes Newcastle, YHN House, Benton Park Road, Newcastle, NE7 7LX.**

Look out for more information about how we're improving how we handle complaints in future issues.



# LOOKING FOR WORK?

**We're linking up with the Newcastle United Foundation to host a virtual event and bring you loads of information about job opportunities in our local area.**

We'll also be explaining more about our involvement in the Government's Kickstart scheme, which is designed to help create jobs for young people, so if you're a young person yourself or you know someone young who's looking for work, it's definitely worth you having a look!

We're running this event via our Facebook page on 7th May, so make sure you follow us in advance so you see the updates – just search "YourHomesNewcastle". We'll be explaining more about the Kickstart scheme in the morning and then having a full jobs fair with content relating to loads of different sectors in the afternoon.

**Hope to see you there!**

Contact us via [employabilityteam@yhn.org.uk](mailto:employabilityteam@yhn.org.uk) for more information and to register interest (you don't need to book on though, just follow us to see our posts)



Your Homes  
Newcastle

**KICKSTART  
SCHEME**

 HM Government

**WE'RE  
SUPPORTING  
KICKSTART**

[gov.uk/kickstart](https://gov.uk/kickstart)

## The YHN family is growing!

You may be familiar with the charity Leazes Homes, who provide specialist accommodation and affordable housing throughout Newcastle.

Leazes Homes was originally set up by YHN in order for us to access particular funding streams that would allow us to build new homes, and it later became an independent charity for a similar reason. Those funding streams have changed now and both the Leazes Homes and YHN Boards have been discussing Leazes Homes returning to YHN so that both organisations can benefit from a closer working relationship.

Following lots of work and consultation with Leazes Homes' customers, the Boards of both YHN and Leazes Homes decided in March that Leazes Homes should return to YHN as a subsidiary, and this will come into effect in June of this year. YHN has always provided housing management services to Leazes Homes and this will continue, so the customers living in Leazes Homes' properties won't see a change to their customer experience.

However, this new partnership will create really positive opportunities and improvements for customers of both organisations and we're excited to welcome Leazes Homes back!



## The YHN website has had a massive makeover and we can't wait to share it with you!

We've consulted with lots of our customers and we know that the new site will make it much easier to not only access our information, but also keep track of lots of other things connected to being a customer of YHN's too.

Our up to date information will be easily accessible on all devices, and we've tested it with customers already, so we know lots of you already like it!

The cherry on top of our new site, is the "my account" section, which brings together tonnes of different things relating to living in one of our homes. From logging non-emergency repairs to finding your housing officer and from checking your rent account to filling out a form for support, it's all available at the touch of a button.

And, what's more, you can also access lots of Newcastle City Council services that aren't usually delivered by YHN – so you can find out more about your Council Tax payments, or check on any benefits you receive as well as reporting fly tipping or viewing details of your local Councillors.

If you happen to work for YHN or the council you can even access your work stuff there too – you'll be able to see your payslips and P60s as well as update your contact details and things like that.

It's all in one place, and so easy to find, which is exactly what you told us you wanted.

Ta-da!

## Keen to get started?

If you'd like to get using the My Account function as soon as it's available you'll just need a few things to register:

- Your first and last name
- Your email address
- Your date of birth
- Your rent payment reference number (if you're not sure what this is you'll find it on the rent statement included in the envelope with this magazine)

**Keep checking [www.yhn.org.uk](http://www.yhn.org.uk) to see our fantastic changes – we hope you like it!**

We'll always be happy to receive feedback though, so if you think we can make further improvements feel free to let us know by completing the 'is this page useful' box at the bottom of each web page or completing our 'Website / My Account feedback form' which you will also find in a variety of places on the new website.

If you're interested in helping us further develop and improve our website and online services please get in touch by emailing [getinvolved@yhn.org.uk](mailto:getinvolved@yhn.org.uk)

# £25 prize wordsearch

Complete the puzzle which contains words found in this issue of Homes & People.

But - one of the answers is missing. To enter the competition all you need to do is identify which word is NOT in the wordsearch then text or email us your answer. Good luck!

P T B Y I K S F Z P C C C G F C Z I F T  
T S K F H R Y F S T Y O V X G H L T Q R  
Q K A M I X N X J V G H M V U K S H C P  
S I K A D H A H G W M D U P X T H V A Z  
K D P A G E V B Z K Y B V Y L O H O O U  
M E A A B F K C K G B K M Q E A K W R R  
R V L S L E M D J F A N F D N K I K K J  
Q E V J H J Y T A P X H X U C P C N A D  
C A O U I P E Q B W B X W I N X K O T W  
Y B J U W F E V F B H G L K O Y S W N S  
S T H O B V Z Q S D S P F T I Y T J H F  
X O I P B K Q W I V L Q P W T N A H D B  
P D Q N N H H B C Q W N W Z C K R C O O  
M W C D U O W I L D L I F E U E T O O O  
E V H H S M C I E B N V V N R E G K J L  
Q N V Q X S M I A V Z M C I T Q G B P C  
B R D U F M R O N G V I D P S B G E U Y  
V G B P K B K O C S Z E G O N E B S C G  
E T I S B E W L J S S K P W O V I R I S  
H E L F C W T V M J A G K W C D P P Q T

Community

Construction

EUSS

Repairs

Wildlife

Complaints

Kickstart

Jobs

Website

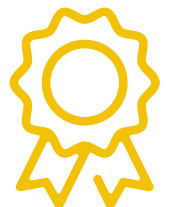
Send the missing word along with your name and address to:

**Email: [communicationsteam@yhn.org.uk](mailto:communicationsteam@yhn.org.uk)**

**Text: 07586 493 340**

**By Friday 28 May 2021**

Please note: competitions are only open to customers with no rent arrears.





# Are you or anyone in your household or family an EU national?

Apply to the European Union Settlement Scheme before 30 June 2021 to retain your right to live and work in the UK.



Call us on 0191 277 1190 or email us on [euss@yhn.org.uk](mailto:euss@yhn.org.uk) for support. We can provide interpreters.

## Romanian

Dumneavoastră, familia și copiii dumneavoastră, ați aplicat pentru Statutul de ședere în calitate de cetățeni europeni? Sunați-ne la 0191 277 1190 sau trimiteți-ne un email la [euss@yhn.org.uk](mailto:euss@yhn.org.uk) pentru asistență. Putem furniza traducători.

## Polish

Czy Ty, Twoja rodzina oraz Twoje dzieci złożyliście już wnioski w ramach Systemu Osiedleńczego dla Obywateli Unii Europejskiej? Prosimy o kontakt telefoniczny pod numerem 0191 277 1190 lub o wysłanie wiadomości e-mail na adres [euss@yhn.org.uk](mailto:euss@yhn.org.uk), aby uzyskać pomoc w tym zakresie. Możemy zapewnić wsparcie ze strony tłumaczy.

## Portuguese

Você, a sua família e os seus filhos candidataram-se ao Programa de Residência da União Europeia? Ligue para 0191 277 1190 ou envie um e-mail para [euss@yhn.org.uk](mailto:euss@yhn.org.uk) para assistência. Podemos providenciar intérpretes.

EU CITIZENS LIVING IN THE UK BY 31.12.20 WE CAN HELP YOU APPLY TO THE EU SETTLEMENT SCHEME

HM Government

Irish citizens or those with valid indefinite leave don't need to apply.

The poster features a yellow background with blue text and two stylized speech bubbles containing icons of a person and a telephone handset.

## Creating a wildlife-friendly garden

The **Wild West End** project aims to tackle wildlife loss in Newcastle's West End. Here, the group has teamed up with Save Newcastle Wildlife to share hints and tips on what we can do to encourage wildlife to our gardens and green spaces.



**National Gardening Week takes place from 26th April - 2nd May. With UK wildlife populations plummeting, gardens are fast becoming safe havens for species in decline.**

Gardens provide food and shelter for insects, birds, amphibians and small mammals.

Hedgehog houses are popular in wildlife-friendly gardens, but did you know that piles of grass clippings, log piles and compost heaps can provide shelter and nesting sites? If you want to build a hedgehog box, this is a good link: [www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-build-hedgehog-home](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-build-hedgehog-home). Do a quick safety check of your garden for hedgehogs. Do drains (particularly where drainpipes go into the ground) need to be covered to stop hedgehogs falling in? Can hedgehogs get out of ponds easily?

Keep an open mind over 'weeds' too. Early spring flowers, such as dandelions, provide an

important source of pollen and nectar, so simply leaving your lawn to grow until May will give nature a big helping hand. Did you know the beautiful red admiral and comma butterflies both lay their eggs on nettles?

Wildlife-friendly gardeners avoid artificial grass, which causes plastic pollution that lasts for centuries. Little bits of plastic - microfibres - break off and harm important creatures in the soil, such as worms. Microfibres get everywhere - even inside the human body. Hedgehogs, blackbirds, and robins cannot get worms through plastic grass, so they will have no food. Keeping natural grass will allow blackbirds get those tasty treats on your lawn!

Weed killers and slug pellets kill beneficial wildlife and should be avoided. Slugs are a tasty meal for lots of animals. Adding a small pond will attract frogs, toads and newts, who all love to feast on slugs!

For more information on **Wild West End**, call 07410 944713 or email [wildwestend@greeningwingrove.org.uk](mailto:wildwestend@greeningwingrove.org.uk)